

Summary/Final Minutes – Work Session – March 7, 2013

Savannah City Government SUMMARY/FINAL MINUTES MAYOR AND ALDERMEN WORK SESSION March 7, 2013 – 10:00 am

PRESENT: Mayor Edna B. Jackson, Presiding
Alderman Van R. Johnson, II Mayor Pro-tem (arrived at 12 noon)
Aldermen Tony Thomas, Chairman of Council
Alderman Mary Osborne, Vice-Chairman of Council
Aldermen John Hall, Carol Bell, Alderman Mary Ellen Sprague
Tom Bordeaux and Estella Shabazz

Acting City Manager Stephanie S. Cutter
City Attorney W. Brooks Stillwell

Mayor Jackson called the meeting to order.

West River Street Power Plant Redevelopment Project

Richard Kessler, CEO and President of Kessler Enterprise, Inc. and also a Savannah native gave an overview of Kessler projects and presented his preliminary plans for the West River Street Power Plant location. Redevelopment plans for the Grand Bohemian at Historic Power Plant are estimated at over \$100 million. This site spans the intersection of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and River Street and will be the cornerstone of the waterfront property.

Mr. Kessler stated that River Street is an immense plus for Savannah, and his intent is to enhance this location. He acquired the power plant property in 2012, construction should be completed in approximately two years and the hotel could open sometime in 2016. The vision is still being developed and the 160-room Grand Bohemian is only one component of this multi-use project. The historic site will also include a café, restaurant and bar, 3,500-seat ballroom, 3,000 square foot art gallery, several upscale retail stores and a 460-space parking garage. It is anticipated the property will become the gateway into River Street.

The Grand Bohemian will be the seventh hotel he's built in the Historic District. Other notable Kessler projects include the Kehoe House, the Mansion on Forsyth Park and the Bohemian Hotel on River Street. Atlanta-based Reese-Vanderbilt & Associates, who is the same architectural firm that transformed a funeral home into the Mansion and designed the Bohemian, will be the lead on this project. Throughout the presentation, he displayed depictions of the project which were imaged by Gray Reese, another partner of Kessler Enterprises.

Mr. Kessler may seek partial financing from the city for the parking garage which will be accessible to the public. The funding could be in the form of a public-private collaboration somewhat like the option utilized for the underground garage at Ellis Square. Construction is estimated to create approximately 300 to 400 jobs, and several hundred more during the development phase. He was commended for his outstanding achievements by council members

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and his previous accomplishments in Savannah were noted by Mayor Jackson who praised his work on the Mansion.

Community Indicators Presentation

Tara Jennings, Vice President of Community Investments at United Way gave an overview of United Way's website and the Savannah/Chatham County Community Partnership. United Way supports more than 100 programs and services at nearly 70 nonprofit human service organizations across the coastal empire. The four priority impact areas they focus on are 1) Education & Youth Development which helps children and youth achieve their potential; 2) Economic Independence advances financially stable individuals and families; 3) Health & Wellness improves health for all, and 4) Basic Human Needs provides fundamentals to those who are in crisis.

All their organizations and programs are vetted through a rigorous evaluation process. Trained community volunteers, assisted by staff, assess organizational capacity and program efficacy, outcomes, service quality and accessibility. The organization also imposes standard outcomes that must be tracked and reported back to United Way throughout the funding cycle. Ms. Jennings described the direction of program funding and other resource investments. She stated that United Way has collaborated with the City of Savannah, Chatham County, Armstrong Atlantic State University and other community partners to establish and track Community Indicators which are specific measurements used to assess the well-being of the community as a whole and to provide a blueprint for successful community impact.

Alderman Osborne inquired about the status of the disparity study, and Alderman Hall indicated that he was not impressed with their presentation last year. Ms. Cutter stated that she has put this out to bid for RFP's to secure a different consulting firm for the study; as the prior firm's submitted update proposal was approximately \$140,000.

Amended Work Session Agenda

Upon a motion by Alderman Johnson, seconded by Alderman Shabazz and unanimously carried, approval was given to amend the agenda to add LOST Negotiation Update and Litigation.

Update on LOST Negotiation

City Attorney Brooks Stillwell provided an update on the intergovernmental agreement and the Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) negotiation, trial and settlement. He informed Council that the City didn't get everything they wanted and they took a bigger hit than was initially offered, but the final settlement was still within the range of the cities. He also stated that the County did retain an increase, though it was significantly less than what they sought. He also advised Council that the City did achieve a long-term goal which was that operating and managing jail time is an expense to be borne by both the City and County.

Council members congratulated Mayor Jackson for her leadership and work on the negotiations and specifically for meeting with other mayors to strategize. The Mayor emphasized that it was a team effort and gave kudos to Alderman Sprague, Acting City Manager Stephanie Cutter, and Attorney Stillwell for their exceptional collaborative work on the committee. Dick Evans.

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Acting Assistant City Manager was also singled out for his outstanding financial information, assistance and advice that he gave to everyone throughout this process.

Dick Evans provided a brief explanation of the term millage which he used to explain the data as he presented a review of the distribution in the final certificate agreed upon during the trial hearing on March 6, 2013. Additionally, it was agreed that the County would no longer charge for housing municipal prisoners at the County Jail.

Executive Session

Upon a motion by Alderman Osborne, seconded by Alderman Johnson and unanimously carried, approval was given to go into Executive Session to discuss litigation.

Upon a motion by Alderman Johnson seconded by Alderman Shabazz and unanimously carried, approval was given to come out of Executive Session where no votes were taken.

Council broke for lunch

Acting City Manager Stephanie Cutter presented the City Manager's Briefing of the agenda items for the Council Meeting of March 7, 2013. The agenda is attached and made a part of the permanent record.

Mayor Jackson adjourned this meeting.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Dyanne C. Reese", written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Dyanne C. Reese, MMC, Clerk of Council